



THE FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION

Wonder and Discovery throughout Cuba's Unique Protected Areas

13-DAY DELEGATION | FEBRUARY 3-15, 2027 (TENTATIVE DATES)

Monitor Cuban natural areas, support independent Cuban conservationists, and research endemic species!

This 13-day working adventure is for curious conservationists, ecologists, and interested nature lovers who will interact meaningfully with a variety of independent Cuban environmentalists, biologists, archaeologists, artists, and historians, while offering support to Cuban civil society. Conservation and conversation come together to deepen our understanding of Cuba and the Cuban people.

As you know, Cubans are confronting a unique situation in their history: a total blockade of all imports to the Cuban government, a collapsing electricity grid, a nationwide scarcity of fuel, and skyrocketing prices for everything.

In spite of these challenges, our presence will have a positive impact. We continue to work together in support of Cuba's national campaign to protect the environment while visiting uniquely beautiful natural and protected areas. Our emphasis will be on research and monitoring endangered birds and endemic plants, conservation, creative eco-tourism, and assisting the work that Cuban naturalists are doing to protect and nourish the environment in Cuba.

This delegation will cover several UNESCO World Heritage Sites: the Biosphere Reserve of Las Terrazas (designated in 1984), the beautiful Viñales Valley and Viñales National Park (designated in 1999), the Ciénaga de Zapata (a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve since 2000), the urban ecology of Old Havana (designated in 1982), and, of course, the flora and fauna of the beautiful Escambray Mountains.



RELEVANT INFORMATION

Purpose and Goals

The tour is for wildlife research and in support of the Cuban people as permitted by the U.S. Treasury Department, Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC). We have an intense itinerary with a strong focus on research and monitoring wildlife, both endemic and migratory, together with meaningful interaction with our Cuban counterparts through formal and informal meetings. Each participant is obligated to keep records for possible review by the U.S. Treasury Department.

Our goal is to work with independent Cuban conservationists working to protect the environment, endangered species, birds, and nature in general, while offering support to Cuban civil society. The delegation will bring donations of optics, feeders, books, and educational materials to Cuba, along with needed medicines and medical supplies.

Payments, Cancellations, and Refunds

Cost: \$3,200 per person, double occupancy. Add \$650 for single supplement (if available). Because of the tenuous political situation currently affecting Cuba, no money will be disbursed until we are certain that the trip will not be cancelled. The trip is 100% refundable.

Included:

- membership in the Friendship Association
- all transportation within Cuba
- all hotels/B&Bs in Cuba
- all group meals and bottled water in Cuba
- restaurant tips; entrance fees; and tours
- Cuban visa

Not included:

- transportation within the U.S. and meals and hotel in Miami
- Flights to and from Cuba (when you buy your plane ticket, make it REFUNDABLE)
- note that medical insurance in Cuba is included in your plane ticket (your boarding pass is proof of insurance, so keep it safe)
- gratuities for: Cuban guides, drivers, housekeepers, and porters
- personal travel insurance
- Drinks other than bottled water

Application and Release from Liability forms

Payment schedule:

\$500 deposit due with application

\$1,500 due October 1, 2026

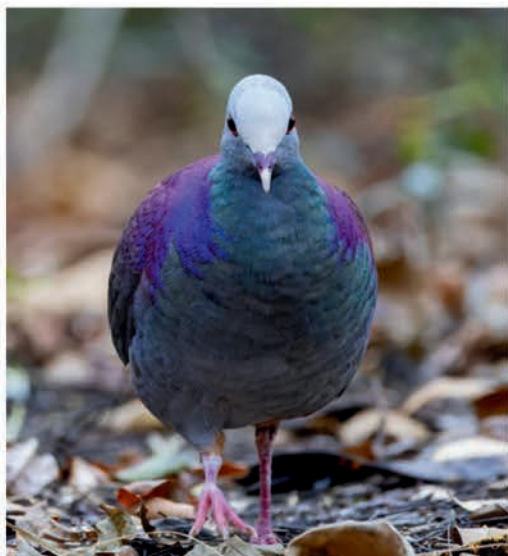
\$1,200 (or \$1,850 for single occupancy if available) due November 30, 2026

With your deposit, email or snail mail a COLOR copy of your signed passport, the [Application and the Release from Liability forms](#). Send deposits by Zelle to 904.808.2030, or send a check to:

The Friendship Association
7265 A1A South, D1
St. Augustine, FL 32080

DO NOT MENTION THE WORD "CUBA" IN THE ZELLE OR THE CHECK

RELEVANT INFORMATION



Payments, Cancellations, and Refunds

All cancellation notices must be received in writing and will become effective as of the date of the postmark. Leaving a delegation in progress, for any reason, will not result in a refund, and no refunds can be made for any unused portions of the trip.

We reserve the right to cancel any delegation for good-faith concerns with respect to the safety, health, or welfare of the participants, major political shifts from either the Cuban or the U.S. government, or international health crises. If canceled prior to departure, you will be eligible for a full refund except for money already dispersed that may be non-refundable. The Friendship Association cannot be responsible for missed connections to and from Cuba for any reason.

SCHEDULED ITINERARY

Because of the current socio-economic difficulties in Cuba, all dates, activities, and costs are subject to change. Size is limited to eight delegates plus guides and driver.

DAY 1. Miami (Feb 3)

Find your way to Miami. Check-in TBA. Free shuttle from airport. Briefing meeting before, during, and after dinner with U.S. tour leader Soledad Pagliuca and co-leader Elaine Stachera Simon.

DAY 2. Miami-Havana (Feb 4)

Early morning shuttle to airport, leave Miami at TBA, arrive in Havana at TBA.

WELCOME TO CUBA! Cuban ornithologist and prize-winning photographer, Maikel Cañizares, and our Cuban driver, Alcides Rodríguez, will meet us at the airport with a comfortable air-conditioned van. Check in to B&Bs (casas particulares) and enjoy a guided walk around Old Havana with Rubén Javier Pérez, historian and Martí scholar. Visit to the office of the Cabinet of Archeology (Gabinete de Arqueología). Welcome dinner at a local restaurant.





DAY 3. Botanical Garden (Feb 5)

Breakfast at our B&Bs followed by a guided walk through the National Botanical Garden (Jardín Botánico Nacional de Cuba). Country lunch with Julio Larramendi, renowned Cuban publisher and photographer. Afternoon visit to the National Museum of Fine Arts (Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de La Habana). Dinner with art critic and historian Jorge Nuñez at a local restaurant and optional concert or ballet at the Alicia Alonso National Theatre or search for Cuban contemporary music.



TARGETS: Gundlach Hawk, Eastern Meadowlark, Stygian Owl.



DAY 4. Las Terrazas & Viñales (Feb 6)

Breakfast and early departure from Havana for Pinar del Río, Cuba's westernmost province, and the town of Viñales. Light lunch on the road. En route, we'll visit Las Terrazas Complex and its eco-community, part of the Sierra del Rosario UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

The economy of Viñales is based on agriculture, mainly tobacco farming, and its soil is considered some of the richest in the world. During our time in the Viñales Valley, the group will study the famous *mogotes*, karst formations created over millennia of erosion. We will visit tobacco and sugar cane fields and meet the farmers and their families at their homes to learn about rural life.

Some of the endemic bird species to monitor in this area are the Cuban Trogon, Cuban Green Woodpecker, Northern (Cuban) Flicker, Fernandina's Flicker, Giant Kingbird, Yellow-headed Warbler, Cuban Bullfinch, Cuban Grassquit, Olive-capped Warbler (a species found only in Bahamas and Cuba), and the superb singer, the Cuban Solitaire. Dinner will be with Nils Navarro, the author of *Endemic Birds of Cuba* and a leading conservationist and artist. Evening together or on your own. Great music awaits at Jardín del Arte Sano! Accommodation in B&B.

TARGETS: Cuban Grassquit, Olive-capped Warbler, Cuban Solitaire, Fernandina's Flicker, Giant Kingbird.

Other species: Cuban Trogon, Cuban Green Woodpecker, Northern (Cuban) Flicker, Yellow-headed Warbler, Cuban Bullfinch.



DAYS 5, 6 & 7. The Zapata Peninsula (Feb 7, 8, 9)

Breakfast and early departure for the Zapata Peninsula on the south side of the island, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve that encompasses a national park protecting Cuba's most important wetland area, home to 900+ species of flora, 200+ species of birds, 31 species of reptiles, and many mammal species. The group will document the world's smallest bird, the Bee Hummingbird (zonzuncito), and meet the local family working to help protect it.



We'll visit las Salinas de Brito to record shorebirds and other aquatics such as the threatened Cuban Black Hawk and the American Flamingo. Lunch in the small community of Los Hondones for a cultural exchange, and then at Playa Larga, we'll learn about the importance of the wetlands with a local environmentalist. In Los Sábalos, the focus is on the observation of Common Ground Doves (tojosa). Once it's dark, we can head out to monitor endangered Cuban Nightjars and owls.

Finally, a visit to Santo Tomás with Adrian Cobas, who grew up there. Santo Tomás is a nearly deserted wetland community, which was, at one time, thriving and prosperous. We will pole the exquisite tributaries in rudimentary boats to monitor wildlife, especially the endangered Zapata Sparrow.

During our stay in Zapata, the group will visit a local agroecological farm for lunch and for cultural and educational exchanges. We'll stay in B&Bs with Cuban families and enjoy educational exchanges with independent conservationists, artists and musicians in the community.



TARGETS: Bee Hummingbird, Zapata Wren, Zapata Sparrow, Red-shouldered Blackbird, Bare-legged Owl, Blue-headed Quail-Dove, Gray-fronted Quail-Dove, Cuban Nightjar, Cuban Parakeet, Cuban Amazon.

Other species: American Flamingo, Roseate Spoonbill, Stygian Owl, Cuban Pygmy-Owl.



DAY 8. Trinidad (Feb 10)

Breakfast and early departure for Trinidad, a small colonial town once famous for sugar production, designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1988. With independent local historians as guides, we will study the ruins of colonial sugar plantations. Overnight in the historic center, surrounded by relics of the town's glorious past. Eclectic music, food, and atmosphere await.

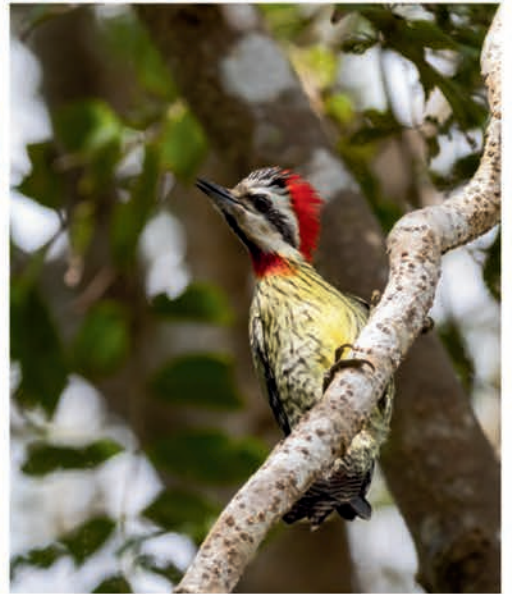


DAYS 9 & 10. Topes de Collantes (Feb 11 & 12)

Breakfast and departure for the Escambray Mountains and the nature preserve of Topes de Collantes, which sits about 800 meters above sea level. In this botanically rich area, orchids, mosses, tree ferns, and many endemic plants thrive in the cool, humid climate. We will be monitoring several local endemic birds, hawks, and parrots, as well as migratory species. Accommodations in B&Bs, and we'll dine in private restaurants.

TARGETS: Cuban Trogon, Cuban Tody, Cuban Amazon, Gundlach Hawk.

Other species: Giant Kingbird, Cuban Green Woodpecker and other forest species.



DAY 11. Topes-Havana (Feb 13)

Breakfast and departure for Havana, where we will meet with independent historians, photographers, archaeologists, university professors, and ordinary people to learn about their work and to exchange cultures. We will also visit important Havana plazas to view their outstanding architecture, and catch the exhibition of Cuban Santeria at the Municipal Museum of Regla. Optional ballet or concert in the evening or... salsa music!



DAY 12. Havana & Farewell (Feb 14)

Morning free to explore on your own or possible excursion to Ernest Hemingway's home, Finca Vigia. In celebration of Valentine's Day (Día de los Enamorados) and our last day in Cuba, we will visit the Castillo de los Tres Reyes Magos del Morro (Castle of the Three Kings of Morro), a citadel that protected the city from pirates in the 17th century. Farewell dinner on that side of the bay.



DAY 13. Departure (Feb 15)

Breakfast and transfer to the airport for departure to Miami TBA. ¡¡¡Hasta pronto!!!

The Friendship Association

a 501(c)(3) nonprofit

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